

The magazine of the Church of South India

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THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

JUNE 1998

It is said that during World War I an English pacifist printed the Sermon on the Mount and had it circulated widely; no notes or comments; just the words of Jesus. He was put in jail for conduct prejudicial to the national safety!

I Dip't into the future, far as human eye could see, Saw the vision of the world, and all the wonders that would be; Till the war-drum throbb'd no longer, and the battle-flags were furl'd . In the Parliament of Man, the Federation of the world. (Alfred, Lord Tennyson)

The ground is holy, being even as it came from the Creator, keep it, guard it, care for it, for it keeps man, guards man, cares for man. Destroy it and man is destroyed. (Alan Paton). (Woman too!!)

Die when I may, I want it said by those who know me best, that I always plucked a thistle and planted a flower where I thought a flower would grow. (Abraham Lincoln)

The ministering angels wanted to sing a hymn at the destruction of the Egyptians, but God said: 'My children lie drowned in the sea, and you would sing?' (Rabbi Fobanan)

The Delphic oracle said I was the wisest of all the Greeks. It is because that I alone, of all the Greeks, know that I know nothing. (Socrates)

A great king once came to Solomon, and asked him for a motto. "It must be one," said he, 'that shall be as much use to me in times of trouble as in times of prosperity. The wise king gave him his motto, and he had it engraved on a ring which he wore continually. It was this: 'Even this shall pass away'¹¹

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THE SOUTH INDIA CHURCHMAN

The Magazine of the Church of South India.

JUNE 1998

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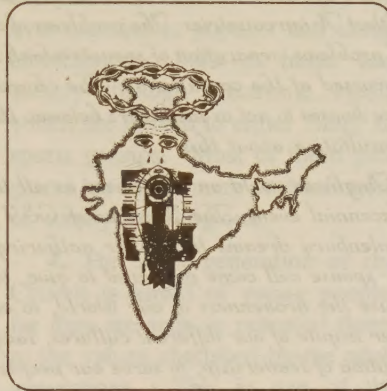
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INDIA'S CROWN OF THORNS

India has done it at last. It has crowned itself with a diadem of awesome 'Nuclear Power'. There is a feeling of euphoria all around and many see in this stupendous achievement a cause for national pride. But we believe this is a crown of thorns. For now it has in its power the capacity to manufacture weapons of mass destruction and this is always a matter of grave concern and not of national pride. This of course cannot mean we are not patriotic or less patriotic than others. We are able to understand and appreciate the threat perception to our national security and no Government worth the name can afford to be caught napping in this matter. India is surrounded by neighbours who are not all that friendly, who aid and abet terrorism across the borders. It is also a well known fact that some of our "not so friendly" neighbours are armed by outside powers who have their own political strategies and feel that they should do everything to contain India. As a result they have been supplying arms and ammunitions, nuclear know-how and missile technologies. And for very many years, our Governments for various reasons have been bending over backwards to please these powers and to pretend to be blind and deaf to what they have been doing and saying.

But at last the uncertainty is all over. Whether other countries rec-

ognise these or not, India is now a Nuclear State. We can also understand the stand taken by our country regarding CTBT and NPT as India has always claimed these to be discriminatory in nature. But now the die is cast. India is a nuclear power. But should the greatness and power of a nation be always judged by its capacity to kill and destroy?



We believe that these were the yardsticks of ages gone by. But now we live in a more civilised and cultured era. Humankind we believe has entered into a spiritual era where evil is always countered and overcome by good, where turning the other cheek and walking the second mile are seen to be effective tools of diplomacy and human conduct.

As the Bard said, 'Rarer action is in virtue than in vengeance' It is also a well known fact that millions of Rupees which could have been better spent to change the living conditions of the vast masses of India for the better, the majority of whom still lack food, shelter and clothing have to be diverted for producing nuclear warheads. To

point out these things, need not mean that we are not concerned about our nation's security.

As Indians, we are indeed happy that our scientists have proved themselves to be second to none in this world. But as human beings we are profoundly concerned at the prospects of nuclear holocaust. To quote the Bard again, 'Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown. Jesus Christ points out the dilemma that is inherent in such situations when He said, "What does it profit a person if he/she gains the whole world and loses his/her own soul"

India now has an awesome responsibility thrust into its hands. There is more than ever an urgent need for our leaders to realise that, 'Peace has its victories no less renowned than war'. Indeed, India has crowned itself, but it is undoubtedly a crown of thorns.

The atomic bomb is here to stay; The one question is whether we human beings are here to stay too. (Harry Emerson Fosdick).

Give me the money that has been spent in war, and I will clothe every man, woman, and child in an attire of which kings and queens would be proud. I will build a school house in every valley over the whole earth. I will crown every hillside with a place of worship consecrated to the gospel of peace. (Charles Sumner)

A word from your General Secretary

The excitement & disappointment over the Pokharan explosion are subsiding. The mixed feeling of the people of our nation shows the mood of another generation. The Shanthi which Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru assured the nation seems to have been buried. The CSI alongwith CNI and Marthoma Churches has issued a statement expressing our apprehensions about the latest developments. (See page 16)

I am very happy to inform all the members of the church that the Synod now has three new faces to work in the three synod departments. The CSI is grateful to Rev. J.D. Solomon for his committed witness and ministry in the department of Mission and Evangelism, who after his tenure here has returned to his diocese. Rev. Dr. W.S. Milton Jeganathan has succeeded him. Rev. S. Devakadasham has taken charge as a director of the Pastoral Aid Department. I am excited to inform that a new department of youth concerns has been inaugurated and Mr. Vinod Victor has assumed office as the first Secretary of this department. Rev. Dr. B.S. Devamani has completed his tenure in the Ecumenical Relations department and has left. We thank him for his contributions. The Rev. Ivaileen Ammanan after serving her tenure as General Secretary of Women's Fellowship is leaving for her parent diocese. It was during her time that the new secretariat of Women's Fellowship at Vishranthi Nilayam at Bangalore came into being. She is making way for Sis. Thankamma Varkey.

I am happy to report that a couple of weeks ago I represented CSI at Sri. Lanka at the Consultation on the Concerns of the migrant workers, especially those of West Asian countries. The problems of children back home who do not understand the plight of the parents, the psychological problems, separation of spouses which result in broken families and the resultant repercussions are some of the concerns discussed at the consultation. The churches were asked to come out in a big way to put up common counselling centres/service houses to act as mediators between the migrant workers and the embassies. The churches have agreed to have a local consultation about this.

You will find every where now in the Anglican world an excitement as all the Bishops look forward to participating in the Lambeth Conference which is a decennial event. The Bishops of CSI prepare themselves with their spouses to attend the same. The Archbishop of Canterbury dreams that "Our gathering will be truly infused by faith, joy and vitality,... that every bishop and his/her spouse will come prepared to give, to share their stories." He further points out, "Our willingness as leaders to recognise the brokenness of our World, to embrace the diversity of humanity and to search constantly for what binds us together inspite of our different cultures, languages and backgrounds. Our willingness as leaders to accept sacrifice as a pre-condition of leadership, to serve our people wholeheartedly looking always to Christ as pioneer and perfecter of our faith". Let us pray that his dream comes true.

I am glad the CSI Synod is now on the Internet with E-Mail facilities. We are becoming closer and easily accessible.

Rev. S. Dyvasirvadham

NEW FACES

Rev. G. Devakadasham of the Kanyakumari Diocese has taken over as the Director of the Pastoral Aid Department. After graduating from the Christian College, Marthandam he secured his B.D. from the Leonard Theological College, Jabalpur and his M.Th. from the United Theological College, Bangalore. His M.A. is in Sociology from the Annamalai University. He spent a year in the Union Theological Seminary, Virginia as an exchange student. He has attended a seminar on Orthodox Theology and Spirituality in the Ecumenical Institute, Bossey.

Rev. Devakadasham has served the Church in various capacities. He has been a member in various committees and boards of the diocese and the synod. He is married to Lalitha. They have a son Gnana D. Hans who is doing his school finals.



The newly appointed Director of Department of Mission and Evangelism, Rev. Dr. W.S. Milton Jeganathan served as presbyter in the diocese of Madura - Ramnad for the last 20 years. He was ordained in the year 1978 and has served in rural and urban congregations.

He completed his M.A. (Philosophy & Religion) and B.D. from Tamilnadu Theological seminary, Madurai and Th.M. from Princeton theological seminary, Princeton, US. The Madurai Kamaraj University awarded him Ph.D. for his thesis: "Contribution of training towards the development of professional Ethics among teachers" which is under publication.

He has authored a book "Christian Theology and Ecology" and translated the book: "Basic Christianity" into Tamil. He is widely travelled and has participated in various national and international seminars and conferences.



His wife Rev. (Mrs.) Ratna Milton is also an ordained minister working as PG assistant (English) and Chaplain in O.C.P.M. girls Hr.Sec. School, Madurai. They have a son Davis Stephen (11 years) studying at Madurai.

Mr. Vinod Victor, 27, a young ordinand from the South Kerala Diocese has taken charge as the Secretary of the newly constituted Synod Youth Department. He is a fresh B.D. graduate from the United Theological College, Bangalore with many a feather on his academic cap. He has a Masters both in English Language and Literature and in History. Vinod has won several prizes for Elocution both at the State and at the National level and is also a good writer and composer. He has been to Thailand and Singapore on exchange programmes and has travelled extensively all over India. Vinod has held several leadership positions and hopes to give a new dimension to the work among the youth in the Church of South India.



Christian Nurture to Young People in the Church

SAMSON PRABHAKAR*

The term nurture refers to one aspect of Christian ministry that is implied in the terms life and witness. The phrase Young People here refers to those people who are between 15 years and 25 years of age, i.e. the people who are neither considered to be children nor adults - a neglected lot in the Church.

I have dealt with the topic by asking myself three questions

1. What is the state of affairs of Christian nurture to young people in the Church?

2. What could be the general objective of Christian nurture to young people in the Church and what are the implications of that objective?

3. What are some of the main guidelines for future action of the Church in terms of Christian nurture to young people?

1. Christian Nurture to Young People in the Church Today:

A discussion with a few Pastors of the CSI who are concerned about Christian Education activities that are going on in the Church and is meant for this neglected lot of youngsters brought to light the following:

1. Christian nurture of young people does not appear to be one of the priorities of the Church's life and witness. As result of this there is hardly any planned Christian Education programme for young people in the Church.

2. What is happening in the local congregations in terms of "Youth Programs" is left to the imagination of some enthusiastic members of the local congregations or to young clergy, who are not specially trained for this purpose.

3. As regards to the kind of 'programs' it is said that they are mostly geared to 'entertain' the young people. While recognising that enjoyment and recreation are necessary in human life, one needs to ask what do these do to young people in relation to their journey of faith as members of faith community? It was also felt that by and large young people are 'not educated enough to look for meaningful enjoyment in their life, as they are over exposed to populist and cheap entertainment both at home and society through electronic media which are limited to either 'filmy' or sports gossips. Most of these programs are either mere entertainment or totally nonreligious.

4. The adult generation of the Church is afraid of young people, for they are seen as potential threat to the values cherished by the adult generations. This is one of the causes of tension in the local congregations. Since the power is in the hands of the adult generation, young people are marginalized. The adult generation is apprehensive about young people's participation in the life and witness of the Church, as a result of which young people have almost no role in the decision making process, even though in some churches young people have some representation in the local administrative body.

5. As far as their faith-life is concerned, the young people are mostly influenced by para-church organisations like 'Ambassadors of Christ', 'Youth for Christ' and 'Campus Crusade', many of which, get support from the pastors and the Church leaders. These organizations use the delicate emotional state of the young people to pump in their populist and individualistic

religiosity. At times these organizations create an anti-church feelings among the young people so that they remain loyal to these organizations rather than to the Church. The kind of nurture they get from these organizations somehow pacify the guilt feelings which is characteristic of young people.

6. One of the main characteristics of the programs of local congregations that are meant for young people is the perpetuation of an unhealthy spirit of competition. Whenever local pastors as well as the so called Youth Leaders' think of a program for young people, they invariably come out with one or the other kind of competition. So we come across Music Competition, Bible Quiz Competition and so on.

7. One of the most important agents of Christian nurture of young people is the Confirmation Class. Many an attempt has been made by some of the concerned pastors to develop systematic guidelines for this purpose. But such attempts have not been able to make any impact on the Confirmation Classes that are still going on in the Church. While many pastors do not take it seriously, others take it as a special occasion to preach at young people or to exhort them about the importance of morality during their youth. Controversial issues of life do not find any place in the Confirmation classes. Neither do they help young people understand the meaning of becoming full members of the church nor do they help them to grapple with the issues of day to day life.

8. In the midst of all these there are some pastors who see the need of shift in the emphasis of 'youth programs'. This shift is evident in trying to have discussions and debates on issues such as social injus-

* Professor of Christian Education at the United Theological College, Bangalore.

tice, environmental degradation, drugs and substance abuse, living in the midst of people of other faiths, and so on. There are others who make conscious efforts to have 'Bible Study' on a regular basis. But these efforts are found in those local urban congregations where younger pastors are ministering.

Even though one cannot generalize the above, in summary, one can say that the unintentional Christian education activities meant for young people in the Protestant churches leave much to be desired. Many young people coming out of active 'youth programs' in our local churches have little understanding of the distinctive nature of the gospel or very clear commitment to life and witness of the church in the Indian context.

A study conducted in another context reveals that most of the young people have expressed a strong need for religious faith in terms of helping them organize their lives and to give them a sense of security. However, they do not want their faith to disturb their private plans for social success and economic achievements. Such an attitude of privatism could be seen even among the young people in urban contexts of India. This is nothing but a reflection of adult moods in the present day society. A sense of mission and personal involvement in the burning issues of our time seem to be far away from their agenda of life.

2. A General Objective of Christian Nurture and Its Implications:

From the above discussion and discovery it seems that we have failed in guiding our young people to the understanding and the demands of the gospel for personal commitment to and involvement in the church as a community of believers, called by God, to extend the love of God to all people. This situation warrants an intentional model for effective and responsible education of the young people - a

model based on a general objective in which the gospel is at the heart, to nurture them in the Christian community so that they will hear the gospel and experience its meaning, become aware of God's loving acts in the context of plurality and social injustice, and in their own lives, and respond in faith.

This general objective have the following implications for a deliberate model of Christian nurture to young people:

Firstly, it implies that young people should be encouraged to move out, by employing their natural curiosity, to explore the worlds of history, nature, persons and institutions to discern their meaning in the light of the gospel. This is based on a proven discovery of psychology. For example, Erik Erikson - a psychologist of human development, has discovered that a crucial developmental need for young people is to find someone or something in which they can put their faith. However, he states further that his quest for a great fidelity must take place in an atmosphere which encourages full inquiry concerning all of the diverse faiths that a human being may appropriate. This would then mean that we must encourage our young people to explore freely the diverse meaning and values they are experiencing, but always in the light of the Gospel. This would enable them to see, compare and discern the Christian faith in relation to alternate commitments. Consequently, this would mean that the activities of Christian nurture should provide enough room for experimentation and that the activities should not be prescriptive but rather descriptive. In other words, an attitude of responsible freedom within the nurturing community is essential so that our young people may be able to identify who they are in relation to the co-unity, in relation to God and in relation to the ultimate goal of life in the light of the values of the Kingdom of God.

Young people in the Indian context depend on their parents much more than their counterparts in the Western context. Moreover, by and large, the attitude of adult generation towards young people is one of authoritarianism. As result, young people in our churches are nurtured in the faith of their parents. But the adult generation also need to make a conscious effort to provide a climate where young people may test this faith, refine it and relate it to all their wider experiences so that it can become their own first-hand faith.

The problem with us as pastors and leaders is that we are not sufficiently in touch with the world of young people and that we are not clear enough about the gospel, its language and symbols, to be able communicators. Moreover, we have not been able to create an atmosphere which rejects honest diversity and dialogue. Consequently, young people are led to resentment and disillusionment.

Secondly, the above general objective implies that Christian nurture to our young people should envisage to create persons who identify themselves as '*servants*', because the church as a community is essentially a ministering community, a universal priesthood of all believers. Ministering means serving. Designing of Christian nurture to young people should be done around the concept of the church as a serving community rather than as a community that is privileged and being served. In the present day context, wherein the Church hierarchy is under severe criticism for its tendency to follow the leadership models that are prevalent in the secular world, the shift in the paradigm of leadership and the shift in the paradigm of ministry becomes much more imperative. Young people should be nurtured in such a way that they internalize the need to be servants to each other and to younger and older members of the church in order that they may be better able to serve God's people in

their wider world of relationships behind the community of believers.

Related to this is the issues of young people's *locus standi* as 'full members of the church'. In order to meaningfully participate in the ministry of the local congregation by way of being servants to each other requires that the young people are full members of the church. This gives them not only a sense of identity but also a sense of purpose for being a member of the community. In most of the churches in India, including the CSI, after the Confirmation young people are declared as 'full members of the church'. But this 'membership' remains in the symbolic level in terms of permission to partake of the Holy Communion and thereby they are considered less important than their elders, although their task may be different in the life of the church. The freedom to exercise the franchise is the first step of participating in the service and in the decision making process. Unfortunately, our young people are denied of this freedom until they reach the age of 21, even when the Indian government has lowered it to 18. This again indicates the prevalent apprehension and fear on the part of the adult generation towards the young people. When it is necessary for both young people and adults to identify themselves as priests to one another and to the world, becomes imperative that young people are not merely symbolically but actually full members of the church.

In order to be ministers to each other, both young people and adults are in need of continued nurturing and preparation for increased ministry in the world. Young people are to be seen as 'young laity', whom God has called to continue his ministry. This also calls for a thorough review of the Confirmation lessons that are going on in our local churches.

In sum, the crucial need in our attempt to nurture the young people is *to be sensitive to the way they perceive themselves and the way they perceive the world*. It requires

intentionality in our programs of nurture. It is an engagement. It will not just happen naturally.

3. Guidelines for Future Action:

The first guideline is based on the presupposition that *young people in the Indian context are much more serious about their quest for meaning in life and faith than we may have assumed*.

Young people have in them more than meets the eyes of the adult generation. Their actions make sense only if we see them as a 'living out' of their own perception of themselves and their world. Even the behaviour of the so called 'rebellious' young people reveals a profound desire to find meaning in life. Developmental psychologist theologian like James Fowler testifies to this fact when he says that each individual passes through different stages of faith in his or her search for meaning in life. He also argues that these stages are cross-culturally identifiable. Moreover, the qualities of seriousness, underlying openness, anxiety about the future and the revolt against unquestioned traditions are characteristic of young people in any given socio-cultural and socio-economic context. A genuine attempt to find meaning for life is universal to young people.

However, expectations of adult generation concerning the basic seriousness of young people seem to be much low. Unless we, the adult generation concerning the basic seriousness of young people seem to be much low. Unless, we the adult generation, take their perceptions, their feelings and their attempts to define themselves seriously, we cannot expect them to take the life and witness of the church seriously. Instead of assuming young people to be carefree, careless, and rebellious our nurturing activity should take them as they are and challenge them to greater efforts. It should lead them to enter into a covenant relationship for serious study and service. This does not mean that the nurturing activity should be geared

to include more "intellectual" activities or studies, rather it means that the nurturing activity should be geared to deal with real issues in the light of the gospel. As Ross Synder puts, *it young people want honest discussion about basic values with adult who will participate with them in mutual 'ministry of meanings'*.

The **second guideline** is based on the assumption that *serving others and life and work of service is much more highly valued by young people than we supposed*.

Experiences with young people in various unintentional programs of nurturing such as *Sharmdan Camps* (work camps), participation in strikes and group activities give strong evidence to the fact that young people respond to opportunities to participate in the outreach as well as the ministry of the church. We have seen young people invariably being used as task forces in our local congregations whenever there are special occasions or celebrations. Where the young people have perceived themselves as the church in action, they have moved out in power, often to the surprise and dislike of the adult generation. There are some congregations where young people are given opportunities - though reluctantly - in all the facets of the ministry, such as preaching, leading worship, collecting offertory and so on. All these are highly valued by young people and they do these with much more enthusiasm than many of the adult generation. This should be taken as a positive sign and the range of their participation in the ministry should be extended to other facets of ministry - such as, pastoral care to fellow youth and their families, service to elderly, decision making process of the local congregation etc.

The **third guideline** is based on the supposition that *in the context of the rapid changes that are occurring the setting and forms of ministry to young people need to be new and more flexible*.

Many leaders, like the ones who had a discussion with me, who work

among the young people are convinced that the existing unintentional and traditional 'youth programs' leave much to be desired. These forms are the product of an earlier status quo oriented Christianity, which no longer caters to the needs of ever changing society. Leaders who are calling for changes are convinced, on theological and pedagogical grounds, that the actual needs of the young people and their life situations should be the criteria employed to help define the forms and settings the ministry with young people. Since many young people find some meaning in the existing forms of ministry, it is important to help them and their parents evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of present unintentional, organised and unplanned programs. Where they discover significance in the present forms of ministry, they may want to reaffirm and deepen. Where they discover weaknesses and irrelevance, they may be more open to the discussion of forms and patterns which may be more meaningful to them.

The **fourth guideline** is based on the assumption that *there is much more willingness on the part of young people in communication and cooperation between young and people and adults than has been thought.*

If one is serious about implementing the third guideline, it becomes necessary to follow the fourth as well, namely, to create an opportunity to have an open dialogue between young people and the adult generation, including the parents. In many a local congregation there is breakdown of communication between adults and the young people. The adult generation invariably complains that young people are not willing to have a dialogue with them because they are not interested in such a thing. But if you ask the people, they would say that it is the adult generation that is afraid of any dialogue because they are afraid of losing some of their privileges. I believe young people are right, because it is the young people who readily participate in the regular corporate worship arranged by the

adults, whereas when young people have any program adults seldom appreciate or participate in it. Young people also participate in the family devotions and family prayer meetings readily but it does not happen the other way round. When the young people are asking for more participation in the decision making process they are actually asking for opportunities to discuss and work together with the adults. They are showing their willingness to learn and find meaning. All these indicate a genuine desire on the part of young people to have communication and cooperation between themselves and adults.

In conclusion one can say that Christian nurture to young people is an integral part of the life and witness of the church. To include them as full participants in the life and witness of the church we must never exclude them from receiving needed ministries, however nonreligious they may appear to be. This requires an intentional effort and planning on the part of the entire church including the young people.

JOSHUA VISION INDIA

Reaching Unreached People Groups

**One-year Master Trainers Orientation, starting on August 1, 1998
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Applications are invited for the One-year Master Trainers orientation Program, from born-again believers with Theological Training (B. D/B. Th.) and Mission experience and a call for reaching the unreached people groups. The applicants are to be sponsored by church denominations or Mission Agencies for the one-year Master Trainers Orientation Program. The program consists of 6 months Field Research and 6 months Orientation at KING Center in Social Anthropology, Missiology, Cross-cultural Communication, Holistic Gospel, Kingdom Principles and Church Growth, and Bible study skills.

Selected candidate will be given free Boarding, Lodging, Resource Materials, and Computer Training. On completion of the orientation, the Master Trainers are required to train and deploy Harvesters among selected people groups over the next 5 years, under their respective Church Denomination or Mission Agency.

Please contact us immediately by Phone at 040-7151105 / 7172471 (Fax) / 08415-22069 and mail your application along with Bio-data, Personal Testimony and Testimonials, to the following address, so as to reach us before June 30, 1998.

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WHY HAVE AN ASSEMBLY?

Jean Stromberg*

Fifty years after the inaugural Assembly in Amsterdam, the World Council of Churches is planning its Eighth Assembly. On the theme "Turn to God- Rejoice in Hope", the Assembly is scheduled for Harare, Zimbabwe from 3-14, December this year.

Then

The reason for an Assembly in 1948 was very clear: the churches gathered to give visible expression to their search for unity. It was a first-of-its-kind event, with the heightened drama of meeting in the aftermath of a world war. Fifty years and seven Assemblies later, the reason for member churches of the World Council to hold an Assembly is less readily apparent.

Moving pictures taken at the Amsterdam Assembly in 1948 provide glimpses of a different era, from the flickering black and white film itself to the cumbersome manual typewriters in the typing pool. The days required to travel to Amsterdam and the large volumes of preparatory materials to be read reflect a time when life moved at a different pace. The excitement of international contacts, as well as the optimism which accompanied early encounters between Christians of different confessions, made a global gathering of the churches a clear first step to unity.

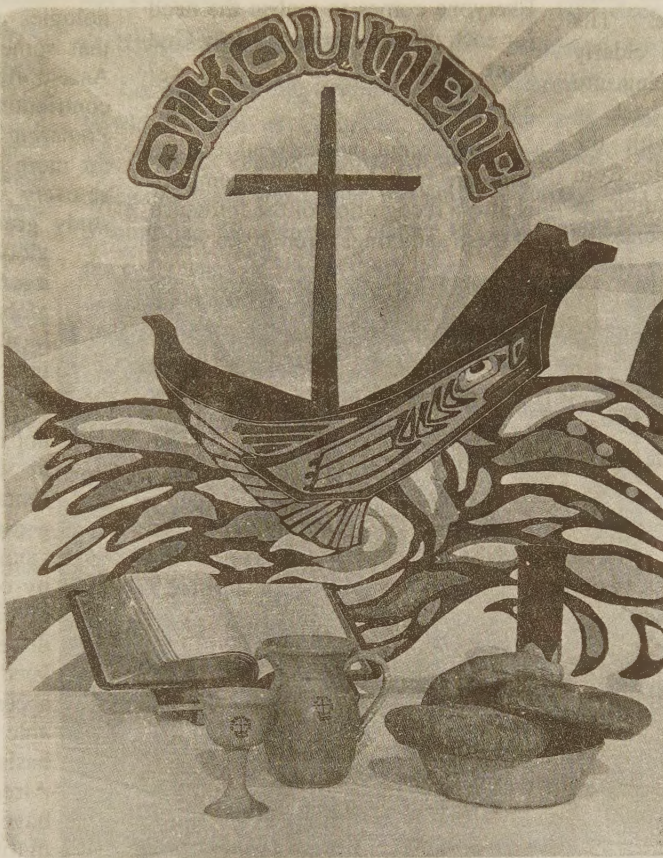
Now

In 1998, however, it is no longer usual for Christians to pray with Christians of other confessions. International travel is part of life for an increasing number of people. Television screens bring pictures from all parts of the globe into

homes. New communication technologies and information networks provide contacts and resources undreamed of a few years ago.

A Better Way?

With so many changes over these fifty years, do large global gatherings still serve a useful purpose? Is there, perhaps, an alternative to this expensive and often unwieldy gathering of persons from over 100



Oikoumene pottery, specially handcrafted for the WCC 6th Assembly, Vancouver

countries? Is it still necessary for the World Council of Churches to hold an Assembly?

I believe it is. The WCC Constitution requires that delegates elected by member churches meet in Assembly every seven years to elect a central committee, to review how previously adopted policies have been implemented, and to determine future policies.

But that is a constitutional answer and, correct as it is, not very satisfying. Perhaps the constitution, dating from 1948, has not kept pace with the times.

A more compelling answer is to be found in the response to recent proposal, emerging from the study process *Towards a Common Understanding and Vision of the World Council of Churches*, that the WCC stop holding Assemblies.

Member churches overwhelmingly rejected this proposal. The holding of an Assembly was seen by many respondents as touching the very *raison d'être* of the World Council of Churches. "It is in the Assembly", one church leader said, "in its comprehensive though still incomplete gathering of people to worship and pray together, that we come closest to experiencing the visible unity of churches".

From the many responses received, it is clear the desire expressed in Amsterdam to gather together as a visible sign of Christian unity is still a fundamental motivation for the member churches who will meet in Assembly in 1998.

Worship

Taking part in ecumenical worship services at an Assembly has been for many a foretaste of what they imagine, or hope, Christian unity to be. For two weeks, the Assembly becomes a global community gathered in worship, using songs and prayers from many traditions and symbolic actions that transcend language. This gathered community experiences a freedom to move across the cultural, confessional and linguistic

Director of WCC's US Office in New York and also Co-ordinator for the Eighth Assembly.

boundaries that usually define congregational worship.

"Participating in an Assembly changed my life!" is the frequent witness of people who have, as delegates, observers or visitors, been part of an Assembly's life. These people urge that the experience should continue to be available to others.

Diversity

In addition to being a visible expression of christian unity, an Assembly embodies the rich diversity of the worldwide church. That has not always been true. The solemn, mostly white and elderly men in clerical garb processing into the Amsterdam cathedral back in 1948, contrast sharply with the marvellous array of people from different countries and cultures, as well as the significant presence of

The rich diversity of WCC Assemblies today makes possible an inclusive and unparalleled sharing of the many perspectives of the churches worldwide. To have in the same Assembly Bible study group a Coptic Orthodox priest, a Peruvian Pentecostal pastor, a Korean lay teacher as well as others from unique contexts and with unique experiences is to begin to experience the richness of reading the Bible from the perspective of the other. No one remains unchanged in such an encounter. No one is in the "centre", nor has all the truth. Everyone comes to realise the need for each other in order to know God more fully.

Shorthand

The recent widespread call to continue to hold WCC Assemblies is also a recognition of the influence of these gatherings through the years.



Korean dance rehearsal for WCC 7th Assembly, Canberra.

women and, increasingly, of young adults who will be in Harare.

This diversity can, at times, seem chaotic. Some may even long for the days when there was one "universal" theology, when recognised experts could speak authoritatively for all. This was the case for the preparation of the Evanston assembly in 1954 when twenty-four eminent theologians worked for three years to produce the preparatory volume. There are many more voices to be listened to now!

The city-venues of past Assemblies - **Amsterdam, Evanston, New Delhi, Uppsala, Nairobi, Vancouver, Canberra** - take their place in ecumenical history as shorthand for significant reflections on a particular aspect of Christian thought or a reminder of faithful action which churches were able to take together.

The Uppsala Assembly, for example, is inseparably linked with its concern to address the sin of racism and its initiative to begin the Programme to Combat Racism. 'The image associated with the Vancou-

ver Assembly in 1983 is that of the striped worship tent, aptly indicating the central place worship occupied in that Assembly, as it increasingly does today in the continuing search for unity. In the Vancouver tent, the Archbishop of Canterbury celebrated the Eucharist using, for the first time at an Assembly, the Lima Liturgy, which had emerged from the historic document which outlines wide agreement on the three traditional church-dividing issues of *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*.

Assembly On-line

The new communication technologies and information networks that some anticipated might make Assemblies obsolete are instead contributing to their effectiveness. Preparing an Assembly today can be far more inclusive and interactive at every stage of planning. Local study groups, in each part of the globe, are not only a possibility, but a growing reality as global issues take shape in local contexts, aided by new information networks.

The Assembly itself does not need to be a distant event to which only a few representatives go. It can be incorporated into the life of the church through the accessibility of materials, the exchange of experience and linking of discussion groups. For this year's Assembly, those with access to the internet will be able to follow event on a daily basis via the WCC's website. Already, WCC web-editors have posted Assembly information on the site (<http://www.wcc-coe.org/assembly>).

Convinced?

Are Assemblies still necessary? Has the World Council of Churches discovered alternatives?

There is nothing presently on the horizon that offers the same potentially life-changing experience or stimulates the breadth of theological reflection. Nothing else yet offers such a clear and visible expression of the unity the churches seek. What Archbishop William Temple long ago called the "great new fact of our era" still finds its fullest expression in an Assembly.

HOW DOES THE CHURCH LOOK AT WOMEN?

A national Consultation to review the Indian Churches' effort to conscientize the churches to women's issues in keeping with the 'Ecumenical Decade: Churches in solidarity with women' (1988-98) was held from March 19-22, '98 at the Ecumenical Christian Centre, Whitefield. Forty women representatives from nine churches in India assembled in this exercise review and evaluation for four days. They were not entirely satisfied with the functioning in the churches during the ten-year period. The feeling uppermost was that in India the decade has remained with few women leaders of the church. Training programmes and workshops organised at various levels could not be shared with women at the grass-root level. Several churches have begun to effect constitutional changes and encourage women for theological studies. These are all small beginnings, but much more has to be done to resist discrimination, oppression and end violence against women. WCC decade is ending in November but it is only the beginning of a leap into the 21st century.

Concern for Women

Whether the church was true to her commitment to the creation of a just and humane society needs to be assessed. The solidarity of the church with women is "the healing of the brokenness of the church". "No society can be a humane one as long as one group dominates, manipulates or subordinates another". There is only one society and it is made up of men and women. Our attempt to remove discrimination should not *push men and women to the opposite poles*.

Exploitation of women appears

in several forms. Homeless and refugee women, abused and battered women, unemployed women, working women, etc. call forth the attention of the church. It is the task of the Church to manifest its protest by being faithful to the call of Christ, *turning old values rightside up*. This should be the criterion by which we should evaluate the decade concerns.

A Historical overview

Looking into the agenda of the World Council of Churches, Rev. Ms. Nirmala Vasanthakumar led the delegates from the Easter morning through the by-lanes of history to the early years of 20th century when women challenged men in the churches to acknowledge their presence and right to participation. The very first Assembly of the World Council of Churches in 1948 received a report on the "Life and work of Women in the Church" and commended it to the churches for serious reflection and action. Each succeeding WCC Assembly has made specific reference to women's participation and called for special focus on their concerns and struggles in church and society.

She also pointed out that a turning point in the WCC's work on women came with a path-breaking conference held in Berlin in 1974 under the theme "Sexism in the 70's". It marked a shift in the focus from co-operation between men and women to issues of social and economic justice for women. The 1975 WCC Assembly in Nairobi, coinciding with the United Nations International Women's Year carried this discussion further, and called for theological and biblical enquiry into women's insights and experiences. This planted the seed for a world

wide study on "the Community of Women and Men in the Church".

The WCC Central Committee, meeting in 1985, heard a report on the UN decade's achievements. Very few churches had responded to a questionnaire sent out by the sub-unit to assess the impact of the UN decade on the status and place of women in the church. Noting that the UN decade had not directly addressed the churches, the WCC Central Committee identified a need for more focused action by the churches. And at this meeting in January 1987, it decided to observe an Ecumenical decade by Churches in Solidarity with women (1988-98) to sustain the energy generated by the UN decade. During the 1988 Easter, the Ecumenical Decade was launched.

Where we are:

The Ecumenical decade began with much enthusiasm in several countries. But hope gradually turned to frustration as women realised that the decade of the churches' solidarity was *becoming a decade of women in solidarity with other women!* In order to make the decade the Churches decade, a suggestion was made that WCC should organise a programme of team visits to every one of WCC's member churches. Team consisting of two women and two men along with a WCC staff person visited its member churches all over the world with a specific agenda to give priority in their interactions.

The team discovered that : (1) women were the pillars of the church, active, strong and ready to carry the churches' mission (2) Despite the social, cultural oppression that is re-enforced by the re-

ligious teachings of the church, the women were determined to endure and to overcome these oppressions and (3) Many christian women have no place to work and to address similar concerns in partnership with other secular groups.

The team not only encouraged positive life sustaining facts but also they encountered some stones that are crushing women. All over the world poverty and war affects women and children the most. The global market economy has ushered in the tendency to widen the gap between the haves and the have-nots. As many countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America suffer from the effects of structural adjustment policies, unemployment, under employment and exploitation have become a glaring phenomenon in developing countries and under-developed countries.

The designated duties of the husband and wife in a family and the traditional understanding of the family play a negative role in the life of women. The wife is expected to be submissive and to give in to all the demands of the husband and family. This makes her a non-entity - a person who is not capable of thinking. A machine that will work and produce children! For the christian women, oppressive theology and interpretations of the Bible are the major stones that hindered their development. Texts being taken out of context and 'authoritatively' interpreted have really distorted the liberative aspects of the Bible. So there is a great need to re-read the Bible with new eyes with women's perspectives. In addition to these, Rev. Nirmala pointed out that women themselves are divided based on class, caste and language despite common problems they face. They neither move forward nor they allow others to move forward!

Violence against women—Stony silence!

Mrs. Aphuno Chase Roy of Leonard Theological College,

Jabalpur, presented a paper on "Violence against Women and Gender Justice - Church's Responses'. She said that women are all victims of gender inequality, and thereby of violence. Injustice is continually committed against them. All forms of violence are being used against women: wife beating, dowry harassments, bride-burning, rape, black-mailing leading to suicides, acid throwing to disfigure, abusive language, psychological and mental violence, discrimination, etc. Giving less share of food at meal time, compelling to do household chores while brothers go out to play are also subtle forms of discrimination practised in homes.

Ms. Aphuno added that the issue of violence against women has not been given sufficient attention in churches in India in spite of the decade concerns. The issue is justice issue. It touches upon all areas of life where the woman is denied her human dignity and identity.

Ms. Aphuno suggested the following remedial measures:

- If the church is a community, then the entire community is responsible for any assault on its individual member, especially women. The church cannot remain silent.

- The women create space for themselves and take matter into their own hands.

- Cultural factors like autonomy of family, socio cultural norms of behaviour, traditions, etc. make it difficult for the church to address the issue of violence against women. How long will the church remain silent?

The church should provide refuge centre/counselling and some means of livelihood for victims of violence, as well as coordinated service connecting the police, medical, social welfare and health services.

- The church should conscientize its members about violence against women through various media.

Catholic Response

Sr. Pauline Chakkalakal of the Daughters of St. Paul, Mumbai, presenting the Catholic responses to the call of the Ecumenical Decade, said that in the Catholic church very little attention was paid to the decade itself. However, for the already functioning women's group/organisations and individual feminists, the decade was an *inspiration to forge ahead with empowerment activities in the Church and Society*.

Although the second Vatican Council condemned all forms of discrimination, in practice patriarchy prevails. Women are excluded from ordained ministry, and thereby from major decision-making bodies. Consequently, the official church deprives women's unique contribution to Church's liturgy, theology, spirituality, laws etc. As long as this unjust exclusion is practised, there is little hope of radical transformation. It is imperative that the church must recover the original vision of Jesus. A renewed Church-the Church as a movement is the need of the hour.

Future Challenges

Mrs. Rachel Mathew of the Mar Thoma Church took the delegates to a discussion on "Women and Future Challenges" A vision Beyond 1998". She said that the decade could not achieve much, so we have to make a fresh beginning: Equal partnership of women and men in church and society remains a dream even today. Man and woman were created in God's image. Both enjoyed all the privileges equally as children of God. All the blessings were common. Jesus accepted man and woman equally. Early church also did the same thing. But we find later on at some period of time church began to marginalise woman. She was discriminated against. The patriarchal attitude reigns supreme. Mary

Magladene's name was removed from the Resurrection story!

Christian history has marginalised or has even ignored the central teaching of equal partnership. The Bible has been used to legitimise the marginalisation and exclusion of women from many spheres. Pyramidical changes and hierarchical structures created hindrances. May be we should opt for something like a "rainbow" structure. Women should be allowed to surface as leaders. Their latent leadership qualities should be allowed to grow and blossom.,

Along with leadership training, a gender sensitiveness has to be developed. Think of the prayers, songs and sermons! We are told that 'He' includes 'she' - Are we conscious of the discrimination? At Pentecost we received equal charisma. Theological issues were discussed with women. But in later years, we left them all to men to handle. We do not feel part of the church proper! We do not assume our proper role in our church assemblies.

Ordination of women

Why should women shy away from discussing 'women's ordination'? It is part and parcel of our participation in the witness of the Church. Is God man or woman? Jesus was man. Jesus was God. But was Christ man or woman? Apostles were all Jews. But the fact remains that Christ was beyond any gender discrimination. Clergy should be sensitised on gender issues.

Economic Crisis

The church has to express its stance clearly about globalization of economies and liberalisation of markets. Most churches train women for jobs. Look at the pressure on working women. There is an underlying element of feminization of poverty. Sex industry is developing in various cities and slums. Poverty is very much part of women today.

What have we done to raise our voice against these exploitation and injustice? Questions of dowry and succession rights and debts which trouble women have to be handled with thoughtful seriousness.

Racism and other issues

Recognising the new forms of racism and ethnic tensions that are emerging and linking them with economic exploitation will be a necessary exercise. We should ensure that the language of liturgy and theology and the images and symbols we use in churches do not reinforce racial prejudices or assumptions. Women are in a way domesticated. Think of the usage of the word "*Pathivrtha*" The woman should be chaste, but the man could go anywhere, to any woman!! Again double standards in morality.

In family, even today, traditional, cultural, patriarchal values dominate. Church has to raise a strong voice of solidarity with dalits and other indigenous peoples all over the world; and support the women of indigenous communities in their struggles for dignity and land rights.

Violence against Women

Woman is still considered as man's possession. There is need to affirm the right of woman to make responsible sexual choices. What shall we do? (1) Develop pastoral care for victims and congregations where sexual abuse takes place. (2) Focus education in congregations on male violence and sexuality and encourage formation of men's groups to discuss these issues. (3) Violence against women as human rights violations so as to affirm new definitions of human rights based on the experiences of violence in different contexts.

Media watch

Media are exerting tremendous influence today with regard to man-woman relationship. Women are used as sex objects in advertisements: "Media watch" groups if

vigilant, can do a lot to discuss the media and to raise protests where necessary.

In all the presentations there was a common appeal to make the debate alive across denominational barriers and to speak the truth in love with a prophetic voice of dissent.

Having reviewed the distance transversed, the consultation succeeded in formulating some recommendation and resolutions.

Recommendations & Resolutions

We, the 40 delegates from nine Church denominations Catholic, CSI, CNI, Lutheran, Mar Thoma, Orthodox, Methodist, Presbyterian and Pentecostal; who met for a 4-day consultation to "*Review the Ecumenical Decade: Churches in Solidarity with women in India 1988-1998*" at the ecumenical Christian Centre, Bangalore from march 19 to 22, 1998.

Affirm that:

(1) the Ecumenical Decade (ED) that envisaged a fuller community of women and men in the church has succeeded in providing an opportunity at some levels for the churches to be in solidarity with women.

(2) Ecumenical Decade has enabled women to analyse and identify oppressive factors that legitimised and marginalised them.

(3) Ecumenical Decade also tried to empower them in evolving strategies to address the struggle of women against

Discrimination - Social, cultural, economic and gender

Violence - both subtle and overt and Oppression - of unjust values and traditions.

We also realise that:-

(1) when we say the church has been in solidarity with women in India, we mean a select few (as the decade has remained with a few women leaders of the church).

(2) the vision of the decade is an ongoing process of commitment and struggle. In a vast country like India, with its multicultural, multi-lingual and multi-denominational ethos, the problems of women are more complex and varied. There is a collective consensus that the struggle is not yet over. Men too have distinctive roles to play in the emergence of new humanity which is common to both the sexes.

In the church both clergy and laity are co-partners in this struggle of women demanding a just world where each has the space for his/her own creativity, selfhood and dignity in community.

We believe that unused spiritual power of women leads to violation of God's just order of humanity.

Therefore we recommend that the church should:

(i) Continue to be a *platform for commitment and action* to stand in active solidarity with women, encouraging their fuller participation.

(ii) radically *change and re-order the aspects of life* in the church which are rooted in practices and teachings that discriminate against women.

(iii) involve in the deconstruction of myths regarding women hindering fuller participation in the church and society.

(iv) encourage re-reading and re-interpreting of the scriptural texts with a feminist perspective.

(v) consider seriously the use of inclusive language in place of exclusive male- language, terminology and imagery in biblical, liturgical and other official texts.

(vi) recognise the urgency to enter into dialogue of cultures in order to eliminate cultures that perpetuate discrimination against women and to change the 'cultural model of authority' into a more inclusive and humane one.

(vii) promote and encourage liturgies for ceremonies that will

liberate women from oppressive cultural conditioning.

(viii) need to reconsider church's silence and inaction in excluding women from ordained ministry. Some of the official churches deprive women's unique contribution to church's liturgy, theology, spirituality, laws etc.

We, therefore, urge the churches to set up Women's desks or Commissions as a sign of visibility for the continuation of the vision of decade to the Third Millennium.

This is our prayer:

May the Spirit of Christ lead us from a willful silence

to a voice beyond that is heard and respected.

May we awake from submissive humility to liberative empowerment from isolation to a community of women and men.

**Ms. Hannah Devashanthi &
Mr. M. Kurien.**

THANK YOU JESUS FOR TRAVELLING WITH US

I was attracted by this inscription which I found written on a bus. The owner of the bus I guessed must be a christian. I have always been fascinated by the writings I see in auto rickshaws which range from philosophical to prosaic, from sublime to mundane.

Does this statement make you think? Whenever we go on a journey do we really believe that Jesus is with us?. Do you remember the journey he undertook with his disciples in the boat when it was rocked by the storm? But soon they were pacified. In our Indian culture and literature life is usually compared to a journey. Do you have Jesus going with you in this journey? Be assured, he can calm any storm.

G. Devakadasham.

One day a little boy asked his parents, 'How do wars break out? How are they declared? So the father, who was very learned in economic matters, started talking about wheat, oil and all the things that divide the world. But the mother thought the little boy was far too small to understand such things, and she said, 'let me explain it.' The mother began to explain, and the father grew angry, and a great argument developed. The little boy was very frightened indeed, and held up his hands and cried, 'Stop, stop! Now I know how wars begin.'

Two men met on a mountain peak. 'I came here because I love adventure, and I have an insatiable curiosity,' said one. 'I like to see the sunrise from new surroundings, and I like to tread where no man has trod before. I like to embrace the universe and admire the beauty of nature from the height and silence of mountain peaks. What about you?

'I came because my daughter is learning to play the piano, and my wife is learning to sing.' (Harvest Magazine)

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THE MATERIAL AND SPIRITUAL IN SOCIAL LIFE

C.T. Kurien,*

Any celebration of Jubilee should make us go back to the book of Leviticus, Chapter 25 which deals with the institution of a Jubilee. The passage may be familiar, but let me quote the relevant sections taken from a modern rendering.

"Every fiftieth year, let the trumpets blow loud and long throughout the land. For the fiftieth year shall be holy, a time to proclaim liberty throughout the land to all enslaved debtors, and the time for the cancelling of all public and private debts. It shall be a year when all the family estates sold to others shall be returned to the original owners or their heirs.

What a happy year it will be! In it you shall not sow, nor gather crops nor grapes; for it is a holy year of Jubilee for you. That year your food shall be the volunteer crops that grow wild in the fields. Yes, during the year of Jubilee everyone shall return home to his original family possession; if he has sold it, it shall be his again! Because of this, if the land is sold or bought during the preceding forty-nine years, a fair price shall be arrived at by counting the number of years until the Jubilee. If the Jubilee is many years away, the price will be high; of few years, the price will be low; for what you are really doing is selling the number of crops the new owner will get from the land before it is returned to you. Leviticus 25:8-16 (The Living Bible)

The celebration of Jubilee in this passage is quite different from what it has turned out to be subsequently. Before I comment on that, I would

like to draw your attention to another aspect that the passage deals with. It provides a description of social life as such. Those who deal with society and social life suggest that social life can be thought of as a network of relationships. The Leviticus passage mentions two kinds of relationships. The first is the human relationship to nature or the material resources, specifically land. The survival of human beings depends crucially on this relationship to nature. Food, clothing, and shelter which are considered to be the primordial requirements of human life can be seen to be based on human interaction with nature. In the early days of human civilization which the passage describes the human dependence on nature, particularly land, was quite evident: nature was the great provider. Indeed, the passage describes a situation where occasionally it was possible for the members of a society to survive without cultivating land, but depending on the volunteer crops that grow wild in the fields. This may not be possible any more, but though not as obvious as in those days, it is a fact even today that human life, social life, depends very much on nature or material resources. Sometimes the human relationship to nature is referred to as the "I-it" relationship.

The second set of relationships that the passage refers to is the relationship among human beings themselves, to other human beings around them, to members of the family, to neighbours and so on. These relationships which may be

intimate or casual, cordial or hostile determine a great deal of social life. They may be stylised as the "I-thou" relationship.

Social life then consists of these two kinds of relationships, human relationship to material resources on the one hand and human relationship to other human beings on the other. The Leviticus passage recognises both these relationships clearly. Now we can see what Leviticus projects as the essence of Jubilee. Jubilee or the fiftieth year is to be "holy" And what does holiness imply? It implies a reordering of the two relationships. Usually, land is worked on - it is prepared, watered, seeds sown, weeds removed and crops harvested - for the sake of human survival and social life. But none of this is to be done during the fiftieth year. In fact, the first few verses of Leviticus mandate that the land should be allowed to rest every seventh year, that is, it must be left uncultivated. We may paraphrase it and say that one aspect of Jubilee was *fairness to nature*.

The second aspect of Jubilee, then, was *fairness to other human beings*. We know that a great deal of the "I-thou" relationship is mediated through the "I-it" relationship. In an agrarian community, thus, the relationship towards land, how it is owned and used, will considerably define the nature of the relationship between members of that community. Jubilee was to be an occasion to emphasise fairness in such relationships. It was not to be a mere verbal emphasis. Fairness

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had not only to be proclaimed; it was to be practised. Family estates sold had to be returned to the original owners. All forms of debts had to be cancelled, and liberty was to be proclaimed and ensured throughout the land.

In sum, Jubilee was to be an occasion for a fair restructuring of all social relationships and thus a reconstituting of the social structure. This is what was declared as "holy" or spiritual. If materials constitute the basis of social life, it is only spirituality of this kind, fairness or justice that can sustain it. Spirituality, then, like language, is an ingredient of social life, much more than being an individualistic attribute as it is often considered to be.

Should we put that in the present tense, or in the past tense? Or, is it true today as it was in the kind of past agrarian society that Leviticus was describing? It should be readily conceded that the injunctions of Leviticus 25 cannot be literally adhered to today. A national community like ours just cannot afford to let all land remain uncultivated once in 50 years, let alone every seventh year. Also, our productive activities are much more diversified and not entirely dependent on land as the material resource. If so, how are we to understand "holiness" or "spirituality" in today's context?

The answer to that question, I am afraid, is not going to be easy because social life has become much more complex than what was described in Leviticus 25. Today's advanced societies do not treat land as their crucial material resource. In the United States of America, considered to be one of the most advanced economies, only around 2 percent of the workforce is now engaged in land related agricultural activities. That small proportion,

however, is able to produce enough grain required for all members of that nation and can export grain to other countries as well. This shows that capital and technology today are the more important material components in social life. And, to the extent that human relationships (the "I-thou" relationship) are mediated through the human relationship with materials (the "I-it" relationship), the change in the latter will get reflected in the former as well. Thus, division of labour has increased enormously with most people now involved in the production of only a tiny fraction of their requirements, the rest being purchased not even directly from other producers, but from shops that store up goods that hundreds and thousands of people unknowingly co-operate in producing. In fact, in advanced societies most people no longer consider themselves involved in "production" at all, but only in what are called services. These changes also mean that human relationships today are not as direct and as visible as they once used to be, but indirect and severally mediated - by money and through markets.

There is, certainly, an element of progress in these processes and they can be considered as visible manifestations of the underlying sense of human dependence on nature and of the interdependence of human beings themselves. On the other hand, they may also tend to cloud the essential, but increasingly latent, social dimension of human existence and progress. Thus when everything that one requires can be bought in shops, consumers become oblivious of production and of the role of nature and material resources in it. The sense of consumption being held under control by production also disappears and a notion of

consumerism emerges that encourages the feeling that anything and everything can become available to those who can afford them. In the meanwhile producers tend to forget the fact that production ultimately is meant for consumption and cannot go beyond the limits that nature and human effort set at any given time. When the societal dimension of production is lost sight of, production becomes simply the individual producer's means to make profit for himself. Nature, the basic provider, comes to be viewed as a mute agent awaiting to be exploited at will and without limit. The producers desire to produce without restrictions and the consumers' eagerness to satisfy their unlimited wants lead to a situation where all the reasonable limits set by nature are transgressed generating a first rate social problem which a social order that becomes increasingly individualised does not find easy to cope with.

This individualisation of society that results in the crude treatment of nature also has a tendency to hide the nature of relationships among human beings themselves. When land is the material means of survival and when gathering or cultivating is the mode of human interaction with nature, the societal dimension of human relationship is quite palpable because gathering and farming are both social activities which call for co-operation from and with other human beings, members of the family and those in the neighbourhood. But the gradual monetisation and marketisation of survival activities and profit making activities result in the erstwhile dependence on others being replaced by the intoxicating dependence on money which soon becomes the measure of all things, including forms of wealth. Money is power, not only over things, but also over others : the power that provides a

form of commandeering more effective than what despots and extortioners had in the old days, and yet clothed in legitimacy, and thus appearing to be part of the natural order. Social relationships too become individualised mediated through the cash nexus. Those who have cash and cheque books and credit cards have the whole world at their command. A neighbour is no longer necessary and if it there happens to be one around, he can be just ignored.

A major "transformation" of the social order along these lines happened in the West during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries referred to as the capitalist transformation of society. It was accompanied by an unprecedented increase in production and wealth which was the marvel of human beings in those days. A school of thought developed that attributed the success and progress of these centuries to the religious fervour of the times, especially to the impact of protestant christianity. In its academic version, the increase in wealth was attributed to the protestant emphasis on deeds and discipline. But its popular version claimed that wealth was the reward of the Almighty for devotion shown to Him. Soon "holiness" and "spirituality" too got detached from the societal dimension of fairness to nature and fairness to the neighbour and became a highly privatised, individualised relation between "me and my God". Socially detached spirituality had existed in the past also in many parts of the world, but it was almost always associated with a withdrawal from all forms of social relationships - a retreat into the wilderness or to the mountains, for instance, there to meditate on absorption into the eternal in this life or in the life beyond.

But in the changed conditions, the individualisation of social life and the individualisation of spirituality became complementary in the pursuit of profits, wealth, money and power at the expense of nature and through the exploitation of the neighbour. In one of its versions, individualised spirituality concentrated attention on life after death, almost to the total exclusion of the "mundane" problems of day to day life here on earth. In its cruder version individual spirituality became a close ally of personal aggrandisement interpreting material progress and personal success and profits as the result of pleasing God through private devotion, thus converting the God of justice into an accomplice in the pursuit of Mammon.

These are not peculiarities or perversions of an age that is gone by either. Here in our country we have recently launched on a programme of material progress through the powers of money and markets. Money and markets are wonderful social institutions if they are made to serve larger social purposes. If this is not done they will be captured by a few individuals who will use them to pursue their own agenda without any thought about fairness to nature or to other human beings. However, such programmes of reckless personal power-seeking cannot be sustained for long. The tragic part is that this fact will come to be realised only through much destruction and suffering.

There is something of a paradox here. The "progress" that humanity has been making and to which more and more groups and communities throughout the world are being incorporated is making it difficult to be "holy" and yet it is precisely under such conditions that a this wordly holiness - a spirituality of

fairness to nature and to the neighbour - becomes absolutely necessary.

What is the role of a parish in this situation? I know that many people will step into the church in search of solitude and solace. And, surely, your doors must be open to anyone who wishes to come in to give expression to their sense of spirituality and to find quiet and peace. But what about the spirituality which, I indicated earlier, is essentially societal, like language? Of course, like language itself, that spirituality must also be internalised by individuals for it to become societal. And a congregation has the responsibility to help its members to internalise such spirituality. However, it is important, to search from time to time the nature of the spirituality that the congregation proclaims because of the subtle tendency to regress into an individualistic, other-wordly piety. It is not merely a matter of proclamation either. A spirituality that is social must become a lived experience of the congregation, every member of the congregation. What do I, as a member of the congregation, make of the worship service that I participate in on Sunday? Am I just taking time off from my this-wordly preoccupations during the week to do whatever is necessary for the salvation of my soul? Or, am I on Sunday standing by a neighbour, kneeling with a neighbour, breaking bread with a neighbour, to remind myself and enable myself to do the same with all my neighbours *Monday through Saturday*?

I trust that as you look back at the jubilee year of our nation and our church, you will find ways of proclaiming and enacting the message of reconciliation and *shalom* with nature and with all neighbours.

WE ARE COMMITTED TO PEACE : CHURCH LEADERS

The leaders of the CSI, CNI and Marthoma Church in a joint statement said - The Church in India has taken note of the underground nuclear tests in the Pokharan range in Rajasthan. It also noted the government's statement that "these tests have established that India has a proven capability of a weaponised nuclear programme... The government is deeply concerned about the nuclear environment in India's neighbourhood. These tests provide reassurance to the people of India that their national security interests are paramount, and will be promoted and protected". We appreciate the technological achievements of India in the field of nuclear science.

The Church in India has consistently stressed the importance of strengthening peace through human development so that the problems of poverty, want, disease and inequality that plague many sections of human kind can be addressed by governments and organisations both national and international.

From the beginning of the nuclear era, it has been our belief that

nuclear energy must be used only in the service of people's development and peace, that nuclear research and technology must have the single objective of fighting disease and improving the quality of life.

It was therefore natural for the church in the years of super power nuclear confrontation to oppose stockpiling and tests which polluted the oceans, the lands and the air, and poisoned the habitat of animal and human life.

The Church has consistently called for the setting up of democratic and transparent regulatory mechanisms that will speedily lead to a comprehensive ban on all nuclear testing everywhere. Patently, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, CTBT, has failed to address the grievances and fears of many nations that it is discriminatory in nature and subserves the interests of only the nuclear powers. The infirmities of the CTBT have contributed to the nuclear arms race among poorer nations who can ill afford the luxury of nuclear stockpiles even if

they are merely to assuage nationalistic aspirations, or to address the fears and security perceptions of their people.

The poverty and underdevelopment in the Indian subcontinent makes it particularly imperative that the region's scientific and other resources and energies are focussed sharply on ameliorating the lot of the people.

The Church in India reaffirms its commitment to peace and calls on all governments to strengthen the ambience of non-violence and security, so that the people can achieve their potential in a lasting and abiding peace, without fear and without the shadow of a nuclear threat for mass destruction. The greatness of a nation can never be measured in terms of its capacity to produce weapons of mass destruction but by promoting quality of life for the poor, hungry and the disadvantaged people. Economic sanctions are not the means of addressing the problem but more open dialogue and mutual understanding would promote global stability and solidarity for peace in the world.

WCC STATEMENT FOLLOWING PAKISTAN'S NUCLEAR TESTS

Below is the text of a letter sent today (Friday 29 June) by the General Secretary of the world Council of Churches, Rev. Dr. Konrad Raiser, to the Prime Minister of Pakistan, H.E. Mohammed Nawaz Sharif:

"The World Council of Churches is profoundly dismayed by the decision of the government of Pakistan to proceed with nuclear tests in Chagai despite the insistent appeals by the international community to exercise restraint. This action has grave and unpredictable implications for the people of the subcontinent, the wider Asian region and the world as a whole. The escalation of the rivalry between Pakistan and India to nuclear competition can only further exacerbate the existing tensions which have given rise already to three major wars in the last fifty years. The path of nuclear confrontation provides no security for the people of Pakistan,

but rather places them and all their neighbours in grave danger.

A fortnight ago, the World Council of Churches wrote to H.E. Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the Prime Minister of India, expressing its concern and dismay at the underground nuclear tests carried out by the government of India at Pokharan.

The World Council of Churches has taken a principled position against the production, development and deployment of nuclear weapons of mass destruction. At the recently concluded NPT Preparatory Committee in Geneva, the Council called on the participant states to take immediate steps for a comprehensive ban on all nuclear weapons.

These developments have revived the much condemned Cold War "balance of nuclear terror" precisely at a moment when the world appeared to be moving closer to an agreement on nuclear non-prolifera-

tion and a total ban on nuclear testing. They augur ill especially for the peoples of Pakistan and India. The heavy costs of a nuclear arms race and the sanctions likely to be imposed by the international community will further add to the poverty which has left the majority devoid of the basic necessities of life in terms of nutrition, health care, education and housing.

It is not too late to reverse course. Other states who not long ago felt compelled to demonstrate their nuclear potential through testing have now declared a moratorium. We urge you, in the interest of your people and for the sake of peace and security in the region, to follow this lead without delay, and to declare your Government's commitment to join the nuclear non-proliferation and test ban regimes. We sincerely hope that you will take seriously India's offer to negotiate a no-first-use agreement."

**WANTED
A PRINCIPAL
FOR
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Bangalore**

The United Theological College invites applications for the Post of the Principal of the College (which falls vacant in June 2000) from candidates with the required qualification and experience.


The Candidate :

- a. should be a recognized theological teacher, possessing an earned Doctorate Degree from one of the internationally reputed institutions in one of the subjects within the theological discipline.
- b. should be a recognized scholar with sufficient number of publications to his/her credit.
- c. should have had at least five years of Teaching Experience in a recognized theological college(s)
- d. should be between the age of 45 to 60 years.
- e. should be an Indian National
- f. should be committed to the Mission of the Church with an Ecumenical Outlook.
- g. should have three to five years of Administrative experience in theological college(s)/ecumenical bodies..

The applications should be addressed to

The Chairman,
Search Committee,
United Theological College,
Post Box No. 4613, 63 Miller's Road,
Bangalore - 560 046.

The last date to receive the application is **31st December '98.**



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